

REMARKS

Claim 4 has been amended to delete the term "autotypical image-data process", thereby obviating the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. But note that the term is used at page 10, line 17, and is also well known in the art (see, e.g., U.S. Patent Nos. 4,852,485 and 5,884,013).

Claim 1 has been amended to make it clear that ablation of the thermal transfer material, the application of the material to form a mask, and the formation of the image points (and non-image points) occur in one process step. That is, the selective application of material in itself defines the image points and the non-image points by covering either the image points or the non-image points. The ensuing steps, recited in the dependent claims, utilize the mask to form a variety of printing plates by a variety of steps.

Claims 1-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over Kesper DE 199 14 323, Yoshimoto JP 06-166162, Rückl U.S. 6,309,799, and Dauer et al. U.S. 5,601,022. To the extent that this rejection would be applied to claims as presently amended, it is traversed for the reasons following.

Kesper discloses forming a chemically resistant mask on a substrate by using nozzles to selectively spray wax in the fashion of an ink jet printer. Yoshimoto (Figure 5) teaches a method wherein a cylinder is covered with a photosensitive material 12, a mask 13 provided with light transmissive areas is passed in front of the rotating cylinder, and the photosensitive material is selectively exposed using a light source 16 focused through a slit 21. Contrary to the statement of the examiner, there is no disclosure or suggestion of laser induced thermal transfer. Rather, the formation of image and non-image points is relatively conventional insofar as it uses a mask and a

conventional light source for exposing a photosensitive material via light transmissive areas in the mask.

So it can be seen that Kesper and Yoshimoto, taken alone or together, do not suggest use of a thermal transfer method to form a mask on the surface of a printing plate carrier.

Dauer et al., which is mentioned in applicants' specification at page 5, discloses use of a thermal transfer film to produce an erasable offset printing plate. That is, laser induced thermal transfer is used to apply hydrophobic material for offset printing directly to cylinder. This has nothing to do with producing a mask used in production of a printing plate; Dauer does not suggest making a mask.

Rückl, like Yoshimoto, simply discloses conventional exposure and development of a photosensitive layer on a carrier.

The claims as amended being definite and patentable over the art of record, withdrawal of the rejections and early allowance are suggested.

Respectfully submitted,

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